

1962-63

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# SECOND WESSEX

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LORELIE FARMER  
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## EDITORIAL

We shall be published, from now on, only once a year. This is not our idea: the Students' Union has voted a cut in our grant. Of course the students of the university finance us and if the majority of them want less of us, we certainly do not want to be imbursed simply in the solemn name of "culture."

It is not our intention to appeal to a limited audience: we do not regard our social function as very much different from that of, say, the union bar; that other people should see us differently strikes us as, at the least, curious.

We should welcome contributions or correspondence on this for our next issue.

## A BLUE-NOSED PURITAN

Round but seeming lithic, the hero of the film caressed the heroine, closed his mean, aggressive eyes and murmured, "What do you do, when you feel like this?" She gazed up at him, her mouth open in wonder and gurgled, "Get married, I suppose. It's the safest thing to do." He had touched many hearts and his love had bathed in the skein-like warmth of the Californian sun. She had swirled, set her mouth cynically and suffered with ease the embarrassment whenever he chose to burst forth into song among the shelves of a small-town supermarket.

Outside, the night of the city cut harshly into the illusion, left it ugly and sprawling amidst the splayed and turgid memories which called up the notion of a Sunday for the watchers in the stalls. Clusters became couples as the distance between them and the cinema increased.

It wasn't that Liam was disproportionate. He held his chest compactly and moved well, below the belt; yet the two were not both part of one and the same, there was no colligation, no rhythm of unity. As he walked with Breda this jerkiness was exaggerated. The effect could have been that of a mischievous leprechaun were it not for the grace and style which she maintained in his company. Instead he was plain awkward and tried to overcome the fact by staring into her eyes for long seconds, perhaps finding some antidote for the peculiar kind of guilt he felt when with her. Now she noticed his search and asked why it was, using a careful precision in her voice, which wanted only a genuine reply. Liam shrugged; his eyes swivelled down to the pavement two feet ahead; he would continue to study the progression of flagstones, their very austerity, no blade of grass breaking the pattern of rectilinear finality, with his brow contorted in thought.

Thought of the sloping, uneven lanes messed on by the donkeys; of the boys tramping home along them under Mayo moonlight; of some, the lucky few, jig-acting with a mot after the dance (and why weren't Breda and he over there now?); of the clean and hushed whistle of the river Moy, cutting the heart of the home-town in two, the bobbing boats, the salmon breaking the rush of the fast waters, the men pitching reels at midnight, the hum and the brown-green reeds and the broken brown-mossed stones, the green, green banks and oh, the green, green hills. And why weren't Breda and he over there now?

I wander the streets and the great crowded places . . .  
Remember with love our last fond embraces.

He kicked a stone and said he wouldn't mind having a car like the hero had.

"You wouldn't catch me riding in it," she said.

"Who said I'd want to take you for a ride?"

"Wouldn't you ever ask me out in it?"

"Not if you were going to be as prim as you usually are."

"Oh well now, it's my life." Breda smiled a saving smile and Liam was warmed by the charm of it. He let her go up the steps ahead of him with the key and they stumbled the dark stairs together, the smell of stews and disinfectant vying for supremacy in the air.

Her room was large; very large with two beds pushed against opposite sides of the square. She shared it with another girl from one of the border counties in the north of Ireland. It was ugly and uncomfortable in appearance; but once the gas-fire burped alight and they had sunk back in the armchairs, Liam stopped thinking about the encroaching hideousness and was mentally disposed to make talk; to banter a little.

"Are you putting on the kettle?"

"Yes. Tea or coffee?"

"You sound a bit like a station canteen assistant."

"That's enough of that now, or you'll make your own. You'll have to have tea, I haven't enough milk for the coffee." Which wasn't really a new thing.

"Oh, it'd take a biddy like yourself to be forgettin' the milk an' all, an' all." Which wasn't really a new thing either.

"What a terrible cheek you have coming here and being sarcastic about the hospitality that's shown you." To say this she stood bolt upright with her left wrist on her hip. But her eyes were laughing, her head was nodding and she had difficulty stifling her mirth. Liam looked at the sinew of the cavities behind her knees as she bent down with the kettle, all unknowing. When she sat down he tried with all his might not to look at the reverse of the coin, with the filmy mesh, the clean fingertips pushed down over and the possibility of a fleeting glimpse further up the thigh whenever she fidgeted. He forced his eyes upwards. They flickered open and shut many, many times; he rubbed them until he felt they could maintain a static glance and open again. Breda was musing at the jets of the gas-fire. Then she switched up to Liam, who smiled, simply, and she smiled and he started giggling and she started giggling and all the silliness broke forth in a general guffaw.

"What are you laughing at?" she said.

"Nothing at all. What are you killing yourself over?"

"I'm not . . . nothing . . . oh, to be sure, you're a hard case."

"Oh—ya—big—long—leb—ya," Liam mimicked. She threw a cushion at him which dislodged the glow from the top of his cigarette. He was about to hurl it back but arrested the gesture. Her hair was neatly arranged to sweep down almost to her eyebrows; her cheeks had a sweet flush on them and her features sorted themselves around the lips, which opened and closed, opened and closed, in humorous exaggeration of impossibility of the situation. Her right foot twitched in the air, made little circular stabs to the left, cut anxiously up and down and finally came to rest with a bobbing, swaying movement. Perfume sat behind her ears, caressed the gentle slopes of her neck.

Almost in desperation, Liam sprang to his feet, knelt down in front of her and attempted a gallant stance; roughly catching hold of her left hand and putting it nearly halfway between his neck and navel, he choked out softly, funnily, "My love." Breda laughed uncomfortably; she was pulled forward by the lunge with her hand and all the air had been squeezed from her lungs. She pushed him back and said, "Don't be acting the goat, y'half idjit"; he mumbled, "But I'm not, I'm being serious," and she gave him another push.

His heels swayed backwards and pushed him into the soft roundness of the seat, safe and unexposed. He slid out his lower lip and a dark sullenness came upon his forehead. On the very brink of tears, he stayed, he subsided. Then, from the silence, he burst out.

"You're what that woman in the film called that man."

"What's that?" Breda asked, lost in the centre of the tension.

"You're a blue-nosed puritan."

"A what?"

"A blue-nosed puritan; you're frightened of the flesh, frightened of being touched. According to your religion it's a heresy."

"If I was to allow every Tom, Dick and Harry to come in here and behave like that and my mother over in Ireland, worrying . . ."

"You mustn't have the great belief in your creator that you're supposed to have, if you're so frightened of the flesh."

"I can't see how you manage to bring in my religion to the matter. I can't see how you manage to make that out." And Liam, less angry, considered the matter with his toes for some second and started in again.

"I know you're living in a big city and that I myself have said that there's many a temptation here to throw a young girl off the straight and narrow, but if you really believed in and loved God, you'd believe in man,



you'd believe we're not all out on a joy-ride to score up as many young virgins as we can."

"There's no need to be common, Liam. I'm understanding you."

"Yes but I know the way you think and it's all wrong. Unless you're going to realise the death that's on this capital you're going to be just as worthless as the next one. I didn't want you to come over here in the first place. You should have stayed over in Mayo. At least there they'd accept the way you carry on."

"I'm able to look after myself, if that's what you mean."

"Don't I know it; and only too well. No. Look here. Christianity has been going for nearly two thousand years and they all expect it to die out at any moment. The belief in God, the love of God, they think it's crumbling. And if that happens, if there's no external figure greater than all man, something to measure our imperfection against, belief in His creation will die away too. They begin to think, at first, that the human race is the greatest thing that could ever have happened. It is the biggest entity. They throw away the yardstick of God and keep His humanity. Then the imperfections begin to show themselves, the mass murders, the big bombs, the cruelties, man's inhumanity to man. And then they throw away man himself, because he isn't worth a light either. Do you get me?"

"I'm following you, I think. What do you mean by the biggest entity?"

"The thing they admire the most. What they're prepared to surrender all their love to. When that goes they become all dried up inside, the reed becomes hollow and misshapen. They get all bitter and twisted."

"Well, I suppose that's all right. But what's this got to do with me?"

"Don't you see? If you believe in God you practise universal love. Your love embraces man. You love God, you love man. With all your being. There's no half measures. It's all the way. You're in danger of forgetting man, the earthly manifestation of God's humanity."

By this time, Liam was empty, and Breda was not very much within herself. She sat forward, her face puzzling the flicker of the fire, just as if a great flood had passed through her, her on the bed of the stream, crumpled. She looked at Liam, attempting a smile, then bent down to pour out tea.

"I think it's good of you to come and say all this to me, Liam. You can be very genuine at times." Liam rubbed his nose violently.

"Yes, well . . . I just like, you know . . ." and he fell silent.

"No, I mean it. I just like to be sure of you sometimes. You can never really tell what your intentions are. You sometimes don't strike me as being all that sincere. And then again you come out and surprise me like that, without any warning and it gives you something."

Liam sipped the watery tea which Breda always made. Her brother made a thick stew of tea which was sometimes as heavy as sherry. He smoked another cigarette, both to alienate the effect of the liquid and calm the thunder of his nerves. She was still; there was a strange tautness in her expression.

As he looked at her, she was still very lovely; for just the smallest eternity he could see deep into the blue-brown pools of her eyes and nothing else. Just the glow. And then it was no more.

Breda stood up. She would walk a little way with him. Liam noticed her quiver and he adjusted the coat around her neck and shoulders. She touched her hair and glanced at him.

"Is that all now? Are you ready?" Liam nodded, his mouth strangely sunken. He shifted and shuffled around behind her.

They passed out of the room, slowing as they faced the dark. Liam tried feebly to steer her by the arm, but he could only just sense direction himself. Down the stairs, Breda got ahead of him, treading noiselessly in the darkness more familiar to her. Liam called out, "Where are you?" Softly though and groping. Below, through the cold, still air, Breda answered "Here." She stopped for a moment, shivered, went on down to the last step and padded across to the porch door. Liam was ages reaching her and shivered uncontrollably. Breda waited in the half-light of the porch, seeming so ever more alone than ever before and clutching tightly at the loose folds of her coat. Liam guessed the last step, and swayed unseeing across the tiles. He breathed down on her, screwing his eyes up to see. She stood before him solidly and he shuffled forward, his fingers reaching to her arm. He rushed his mouth blindly down to hers and kissed the lips for many seconds. Then he slipped his nose down on to her neck, their cheeks together, and he trying not to scrape the rough stubble against her skin. He moved his head around to the other side of her face where she was just as hot and flushed. She niffled as he moved. He felt now that his hands should make movements on her neck, but he could not sustain any sort of sensation for long, so he kissed her on the mouth again, unable to find exactly the right and true fixture of lips, as they wobbled together, uncertainly, in the night.

TEACHER

He bends forward over the classroom table  
in the emptied light, in fawn varnish,  
where visual aids, face to face,  
like frigid wives, mourn at each other from the walls.

Framed in the window is a virgin head,  
submitting to the bounce of three-ball  
motion- and expression-less; and then beyond  
and under dirty boys, a tennis ball

is kicked unwillingly between two dustbin goals,  
a shout goes up, no girl is pleased.  
He passes through them like a god  
to find the staff-room pattern jocund like Olympus.

And sits among them, ragged, like a Greek slave  
who sharpens tools against himself  
for someone else, tools that warriors  
have pushed into their children's hands for Rome.

DANCER

Her eyelids close. She parts blunt lips  
high upward, curving back her head.  
And she becomes a fluid line, throat and hips  
through one arc, stylizing dread

in dance, eternity's ellipse  
that limbs figure sharp against the dead  
air of breaths. Her skin slips  
through filming rhythm. She exists spread

on other eyes, whom her pulse grips.  
They exist in her, within the tread  
of elongated feet, and in the tips

of reaching fingers. Only this can mean:  
self merged in other, each shed  
in form, the numb rite, that stands between.

JOHN HAYNES

SONG

If I hold the neutron still,  
time against a vow,  
I grip the acorn, I kill  
becomingness with now.

If I chip the stone  
stillness of this very thought,  
it is the need to own  
what owning must distort.

If I tongue no sorrow  
in the first zenith of embrace,  
I lick; I do not swallow.

The stone or the bronze stays:  
but the becoming waters follow,  
and absorb, and erase.

MARXIST POEM

Wood-rot powders from the planks  
like dandruff, like an hourglass,  
spinning from the rafters  
where he learnt to speak.

No conflagration of the dry beams,  
but spiralling worms filing inward tunnels  
and wood-dust like words  
as hard once as timber when he learnt them.

To his mind taught under it,  
the specks spread, not like an accident,  
yet he has no word for what it is.

When its overbalance sends the roof  
dropping at the floor, the walls  
are pecked off gently by the wind,  
and he returns here:  
then there must be something he must say,  
something across the unforeseen wreckage,  
a mode of sight, an epigram, a glad curse  
improvised from what it taught.

MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

No one said  
"Women, today is fat.  
Letters long-carved in stone rims begin to move.  
A cold intention swells warm and saint strong to give,  
To cross and re-cross white limbs  
To pour blood in your thin poor soil.  
But first the token:  
A child's blood for a god's blood."

No one said  
"A sacrifice  
And all will be well."

Instead  
Oafs wrenched empty the lap,  
Smashed the young on city stone,  
Spat in blood gutters.  
And the women writhed like water,  
Their open arms a curse,  
Their thousand cries one cry elsewhere  
Bloodwet before its eye opened.

MADAME

Madame has thick red lips and thick pink flesh  
And guzzles sticky liqueurs in her little French cafe.

She pays for her son to study for the priesthood  
With the grey coins she sucks up each day.

When Madame's tiny Catholic eyes blink  
All the power and the glory are squeezed behind.

And Madame's soul, a coarse white fish,  
Flits its sticky fins on the Boulevard St. Marie.



A SONG FROM HONAN

My people were the servants of the Yellow River god.  
In my eighteenth year the shamans went from house to house.  
Eagerly pressing across my father's threshold,  
They found me setting water in the nightingale's cage,  
And tore me from my small tasks, from my ancestor's home.

I was bathed in sweet scents  
And dressed in finely worked silks.  
My hair was drawn up like a dark magnolia.  
But I did not look in the gilded mirrors  
Held out for me. My eyes gazed coldly past.

When they had done the shamans led me away  
To their house of purification on the river bank.  
And for ten days I was secluded there  
Behind red curtains, sometimes glimpsing grey water,  
While my mind gradually emptied.  
I was not of the shaman people to exult.

On the tenth day they dressed me like a bride,  
Dusted my face with white powder,  
And set me afloat on a bridal-raft.  
The white mist is chilling my skin  
But I cannot hear the god stirring from his dragon-scale palace.  
Can it be my fate is as empty as a drifting shell?

THE U.S.A.

Is so cute—  
Flutters cosmetic cities  
For the boys to see,  
Peeps at its nipples  
In sterile corners,  
And adores the faint  
          scrape scrape scrape  
Of its paint  
Against the empty stomach  
Of a child.  
  
Jazz sniffs its behind  
          and knows not to touch.

THE VEIL

When hands of tortured steel caress the dawn,  
And smooth the haven red with tempered blood,  
The linen of the sea dissolves the sky,  
And lifts a vein of tiredness from the moon.

The dampened sheet of mist is torn apart,  
And odours from unhealthy streets ascend;  
The eye of bitter blue is flushed with grin  
Of sun, child-blushing at his excrement.

The murmur on the nettle of the waves,  
Should streak the understanding grey with sobs:  
But tendrils wrestle with the vocal strain,  
And rob the mourner of a silent friend.

But we away from conflicts such as these  
Investigate the pleasures of dark rooms,  
And with the curd of intellect revealed  
Discover we were born to disapprove.

I PAGLIACCI

I shall return to the idiom of my former days  
Where peace was the bridge upon my indecisions  
And time pirouetted on my heart—alone

Where voices did not ring in fear  
For clouds refused to rumble into storm  
As ships lay grazing silent on the stone

Ridi! Ridi!  
The jester is returning  
Home.

## THE PERSUASION OF ALLEGORY:

### *A Study of Contemporary French Cinema*

Once again—I walk on, once again, down these corridors . . . I was already waiting for you . . . And once again I was walking on down these same corridors, walking for days, for months, for years, to meet you . . .

"L'Année Dernière à Marienbad" and "Cléo de 5 à 7" are appraised as brilliant films of technique, virtuoso performances by master photographers. "Pickpocket" does not even receive this accolade. These three films and some others ("Un Chien Andalou," "Lola Montes," "La Notte," "Caligari," "The Medium," "L'Avventura" or Robbe-Grillet's new "L'immortelle") are finally dismissed as being too intellectual, too detached from real emotion or as being marred by oversophistication or unnecessary complexity. The first two are especially marked out to demonstrate the development of form or technique at the expense of content. Similar arguments are levelled against the New Novel.

Bresson's "Pickpocket" marks not a new development but the adaptation of an old medium to the cinema. Superficially the real world is presented—Paris, cafes, streets, people and theft. Yet there are some inconsistencies of realism—Michel's turning to crime is motiveless and certain scenes are accompanied by the court music of Lully, anachronistic in the contemporary setting. It is on the allegorical plane that Bresson makes sense. Michel's thefts are attempts to gain salvation—the mocking Lully is heard at his first theft. The bareness of his room suggests his inner sterility and he hides his loot (guilt and/or vanity) under the floor. He learns his trade from an English highwayman's primer of the eighteenth century, suggesting an escape into a false world. Bresson similarly chose an English word to title his film—"Pickpocket." Finally, he is caught. It is in the prison visiting room that he achieves salvation, or rather the grace to attain it. He moves in a mutual love for Jeanne, incidentally accepting her illegitimate child by his former friend, and the film closes on the light circle of their faces and on the real triumph implicit in Lully's music.

In the allegory all details are significant. He sees a theft committed in the Metro, that is, sin is a secretive move towards salvation that cannot succeed because the train must stop. One admires instinc-

tively the beauty of Michels' thieving technique; yet, when he attempts robbery at the races he meets his victim's handcuffs instead of a wallet. Craft is outplayed by the superior craft of authority. Thus a rich pattern of allegorical detail may be elaborated. Yet at whatever level one regards the film it is still satisfying.

The emotions are deliberately restrained and the details are rigorously thought out. However to say that "Pickpocket" is cold or theological is to suggest that the exploration and resolution of the moral life is without valid human emotion. The film persuades us of the truth of morality by its vigorous argument and allegoric complication. The cause of the film's ill reception may lie in a contemporary dislike of such an ascetic approach and in the fact that it was released during the scintillating, largely amoral New Wave.

Varda's "Cléo de 5 à 7" is of the documentary literary cinema. Chapter-headings appear in the sub-titles, and the delicate camera-work makes it a "photographic film," aesthetically pleasing to the eye.

The opening frames are in colour as the Tarot cards are played out in close-up and their significance interpreted. We see only cards, tablecloth and hands. Abruptly Cléo and the fortune teller appear in black and white. Equally abruptly we return to the colour of the card shots. The technique is apparently revolutionary. At a first viewing the cards are in colour because they are the real facts and symbolically the rest is in black and white. They foretell the danger Cléo must face. Afterwards the palmist tells her friend that Cléo will die of cancer. However by the end we know Cléo has cancer but will be cured. Since the cards foretold death, they must indicate a metaphorical one. "Cléo" is the story of this death which is the death of worldly pretension and illusion with the discovery of life and real contact. The film is a minute-by-minute documentary of her progress.

With her we realise the superficiality of her life in a series of revealing scenes—the hat shop, the unsympathetic friends, the artificial lover, the trivial song into which she pours all her anguish, the inhuman frog swallower and the callous looks of the males. In one sequence she removes a wig, and in another she stalks solitary through a cafe, finding the world's miseries on all the faces. For her what she sees has a symbolic significance—the voodoo masks or the cartoon film. Yet for the spectator they assume a greater meaning because we see both Cléo and her setting interact with one another. As in the Bresson films we are watching an allegorical progress with the difference that background is more closely integrated into the structure.

The meeting with the soldier takes place in a park and a natural (the previous scenes take place in the brittle, lighted atmosphere of rooms and studios) companionship springs up. He calls her by her real name, the only person to have done so. The images are beautifully made—the bus-ride, the shop window reflections, the sadness and delicacy of the leaves and, imperceptibly, reminders of her anxiety—the bus-stops at Les Invalides, Pompes Funébres is seen over a shop. Finally the doctor's welcome news is given in the solemn, reassuringly solid atmosphere of the hospital grounds. The film ends on a note of sober joy and sadness for the soldier must catch his train and may never meet her again.

The attractive technique and imagery of the camera persuade us to withdraw with it for a more detached look at Cléo and her relationship with her surroundings. The carefully selected symbols presuppose a definite moral position from which we can judge their significance for her. In one sequence we find a more extraneous comment: when Cléo is going by taxi to the park, there is a shot of the leaves above and the sign "Taxi." This makes the idea of progress explicit. Similarly the dark entrance to the cinema projection room refers on to the ingenious darkly symbolic cartoon film. Again this is an allegory of redemption, yet this time made more persuasive of the truth of its condemnation of the artificial world by placing it within the texture and rhythm of everyday life and an individual's special search for honest happiness.

Resnais' and Robbe-Grillet's "Marienbad" presents a challenge to the spectator. It combines both the exact locale description of "Jalourie" with the uncertainties of "Le Voyeur" together with the repetitious style common to many New Novels. "Marienbad" has elements common to "Une Aussi Longue Absence," which Duras scripted with her characteristic backstitch dialogue.

"Marienbad" is an experiment with the reality of time and place. The plot of the film is a logical development of Proust's idea of love as being sustained by actual absence or inaccessibility of the loved one, by her refusal to respond or by the suspicion of infidelity. Desire is created through jealousy. The film also involves Proust's "involuntary memory" by which a scene is accidentally recalled from the past more vividly than when it actually occurred. With his complex cinematic rhythms Resnais is exploring, testing and elaborating certain features of the Proustian aesthetic.

At the end one is left with the frightening suspicion that something took place but one cannot be quite sure what. The other man (Sacha Pitoeff) could be her (Delphine Syrig) husband, father or brother. Half a play's title is seen frequently—it is Ibsen's "Rosmer(holm)" which has

the sub-themes of adoption, illegitimacy and a mistress. Possible interpretations of "Marienbad" are numerous, yet one fact clearly emerges, that the man (Giorgio Albertazzi) wants her back. It is a dream of redemption that is not resolved. If it were ever resolved the film's complex confusions would be worked out.

The passion of this uncertain love is inescapable, expressed through the violent movements of scene and costume and through explosive camera-work (normal, negative and blindingly over-exposed intermingled.) Yet though the technique is novel, it is not merely a technical achievement or an abstract æsthetic game. The film is baffling not because it has no meaning but because it has multiplicity of meanings which together form an image of absolute uncertainty, that can be achieved only through startling formal innovations. The helpful suggestions of the two directors must be seen as a deliberate attempt to further confuse the issue. In this film the content is decided by the form which is rigorously disciplined. The only comparable film is "Un Chien Andalou" yet this is not marked by the same control. The confusion of symbols is a result of a similar confusion and a deliberate anarchistic manner in the minds of Dali and Bunuel—with the unintentional double irony they announce at the beginning that they are not responsible.

"Marienbad" follows a rigorous logic. The plot and location are deliberately fantastic, like the extravagant costumes of Seyrig. The characters' actions are unmotivated as in "Pickpocket." As the plot and character are of no interest we must see the film as an allegory, though in an imaginative new form. Like "Pickpocket" and "Cléo" it is an allegory of redemption. Yet in these two the presence of grace is not in doubt and is finally achieved by Michel and Cléo. In "Marienbad" even the presence of grace (her love) is uncertain. It is a doubly unresolved quest, to establish that love exists and then obtain it. The other man and in some way the statue-people constitute a constantly threatening moral authority against which the action is played and in which they, the authority, are themselves involved. Multi-faced eternity is suggested by the endless corridors and the solidity of the chateau. The story in fact does not exist except on the allegorical plane of the uncertainty of the love-quest. The newly released "L'Immortelle" may offer a new development of this vision—it has certainly the further complication that the film depends on something that did take place, rather than on a supposed fiction.

Each of these directors, by their own personal disciplines, have persuaded us of the validity of their differing moral positions. The first two have more than one level of meaning and a final reality that salvation



is possible embodies all the levels. They are allegorical progresses. "Marienbad" has a complexity of meanings rather than independent but mutually co-ordinated planes of understanding, and it ends unresolved. It is the allegorical denial of progress. Yet, while assuming varying æsthetic and moral viewpoints which may be common to other artists, these directors have been able to persuade us of the authenticity of their different versions of reality without having sacrificed their individual styles to the anonymous exigencies of the box-office.

P. J. HOOKER

A FOOL EXAMINES THE SPRING

Birds add no saving clauses at woodedge,  
Invisible anarchists roofed in webs  
Of shadow under the pale slate sky

Or tufted like cones, alert, still.  
Throats pulse and pause as darkness  
Like a stooping giant levels

Grass and tree, leisurely, invincible.  
I wonder is it joy pumped  
From the full glad bodies

To the kind sky and earth's throb  
Or an engine for the sun to start  
And the night to lull.

P. J. HOOKER

SHORT THIN POEM FOR ALFIE

March has big tits  
and a knack of deftly  
posturing on one leg  
for snaps wearing only  
a muslin slip a coy  
smile and holding a

parasol plunk! goes  
my dart in Doubl-  
top quivering the

sandy gnome cups  
a woodbine watching  
his glass fill he

has seen all this  
before so have we.  
Today is April 4.

A FANTASY

- POET     I wish I was a tree.  
           An oak  
           Its spiny fingers pinching sky and cloud  
           To tiny squares of blue and white.  
           A solitary elm  
           Tall on a crown of field,  
           Moated by lowlands,  
                 Sky for headpiece.  
           A vined hazel  
           Skin-smooth in halfflight  
           Lanced by sun, joyful as a bird  
           Drops careless song,  
                 With wriggling catkins.
- X         Dream, the world has not savaged you.  
           Earth is gentle here. Solent is a stream,  
           Its white tongues dab the low shore,  
           Your tallest hill is smooth as breast,  
           Your clean towns not sore with beggars.  
           Behind those hills the towns are skulls  
           Overgrown by iron nettles, grinning smoke.  
           The hungry poor are footsteps in my silent dreams.  
           Be a vegetable, poet. It is fitting.  
           A man is made for action, guilty  
           Treacherous loving longing . . . longing.  
           Who deputises when you stand empty within yourself?  
           They execute in your name poet painter dreamer,  
           The gaps you open cram with guns,  
                 The emptied socket  
           Bleeds poor and prisoner alike.
- POET     No. We made the gaps  
                 Turning from the tree's humility,  
           Wounded the man,  
                 Sent mystery in exile,  
           Menace supplied the wound.
- X         A vegetable humble!  
                 Primitive longing poet.

Behind the turned back  
Conspirators gather,  
Take all the weapons.  
Learn logarithms study timetables  
Decipher television decode pop songs  
Prepare to meet challenge  
With challenge.  
Murder and the homeless neighbour us.

POET      Trees are the old Gods,  
                 Wisser than men.  
Still and silent,  
                 Neither still nor silent.  
Go in awe,  
                 Stay in wonder.  
Returning, you will not tie your vision to words.  
No. I would be a leaf.

X            Vegetable.

POET      To wonder and watch  
                 To worship and watch,  
To know sap and sun,  
                 Root and bark  
Bud and . . .

X            Firewood, pitprops,  
                 Sawmills, swings  
Little boys nesting, scrabbling shins,  
Lovers carving.  
Your Gods are the true servants.

POET      Of course. My Gods are the true victims.  
No tongue ear sense habit,  
                 Only the living knowledge.  
The living must always be victims  
                 Of the partly living.

X            Growth and decay,  
                 No consciousness.

POET      How do you know?  
Fear said tame what is not man.  
We say the horse is in the field.  
We made both horse and field.

Pride said rule,  
    Master was assured,  
Ordered sky at nose level  
    Mystery died.  
We are a shabby miracle,  
    But still a miracle.  
    A leaf,  
        Leaf veined by sun  
And sap, a leaf . . .

X       Dreamer.

POET     We stand behind a wall of words  
          Invisible, opaque.

X       Fool. I have the trumps  
          LIFE DEATH LOVE FEAR HATE  
          HUNGER  
          THIRST PITY SEX . . .

POET     WORDS  
          I am swayed by breeze.

LEAF     I am forgetting, forgetting.  
          What are you?  
          Shabbier than crow hoarser than jay.  
          The bird is song.  
          Only you are pieces.  
          Self created slave in self created shell.  
          What are you?  
          What is what?  
          What is are?  
          What is you?  
          What . . .

X       He will return.  
          Of course I like trees too.  
          A nature lover I.  
          Time calls  
          Today are committees executive meetings  
          Typing writing letters appeals  
          Refugee aid. Full life, and I still feel  
          Despondent sometimes. (exit)

LEAF      Leaf is I            Is wind is tree  
Is earth is creature            Is mysterious song of God  
Is light is sun is hymn            Is yes, O YES  
In my kingdom is yes            And death is another kingdom,  
And that is yes,            Always and always.

P. R. GRyce

A FLASH OF CRYSTAL

Eyes hurt in the scuff of sun  
And hold out for hidden surfaces  
Away from the tearing sand  
And a thorn's bare sting.  
The quality of water  
Rises to the face and hand  
Like a white bird wheeling  
In the hungry hunter's gun,  
And limbs yearn to plunge laughing  
In the river's groove and run:  
Yet the ponderous sky forbids  
And faithless mirage of desire  
Turns flashing water back to fire.



OVERBOARD

Young legs torn in the heave  
By the slaughter-fish  
And the arms out like a gull  
As the sailor threads death in the weave  
And the wind of the ocean,  
Paying the boat's trespass  
In his plunge to the deep point  
In the torn net sinew of his youth.  
The wound scars grey coldness  
Bringing a brief sunset  
To the dark waters,  
A tainted daylight to the brine.  
Paid out from the mask of sails  
And the broken landfall's edge  
The line is drawn through spin-drift  
And is snapped in the luring depths.

The last membrane of the man  
Falls out of the ship's sight  
Half to fill the shark's belly  
Half to make the heart of ocean  
Blush for shame.

SEA PIECE

Attitude of rock and touch  
Angled the hail of surf  
To the hillocks  
And the teeth of pebbles  
Gritted the sea's muscle  
In the rattling strain of breakers  
In the tearing of a sailor's hope.

A leaden twist of jetty  
Groaned iron into the dense blue  
Scraping rough edge  
Beyond the sand and wash  
To the red coils of sun,  
As a gull swinging his breast  
And blade of wing  
Flung exploration over the white foam scar  
Over the ocean's crest  
To the sail in the water's run.

SEA-SHORE

Strange that,  
Where the mildew caked in bubbles  
And the crusty leech  
Powdered into dry foam  
Below the salted sea-grass,  
There once was life.

And here,  
The battered whelk-shell skeleton  
Has crushed a spark in her fall,  
Struck between creation and destruction  
Without cause.

Yet soon  
The palm shall sweep its course  
After the fingers of the night  
In prey,  
Muttering invocations as it chases  
Death across the worm-casts.

## A GIRL FROM A SHOP

Dilly sat on a bench breathing hard. She had missed the bus. Twenty minutes to wait. She stabbed her heel through a snail. Neat hole, but it soon filled with pus and bits of shell. Messy, like a volcano, like a heart. Twenty minutes to wait. She mustn't let it get her down, I mean, it's only missing a bus and it's just bad luck that it happened after she had such a terrible afternoon in the shop. The sounds, the nattering air, came back close and hot on her ears and tiredness trickled down her back. "I'll see the manager," she'd like to have hit the stupid complaining head with its own umbrella, a clean distant stroke like the sound of cricket, a sound to calm the air and bring all the boxes crashing crashing down in applause, oh, for once applause and the crashing and falling with her, running beside her laughing, no longer punishing her knuckles and shins.

The tired heat was beginning to drain from her. She shivered in the six o'clock air and stared ahead to ward off coldness. A mission hall straight across the road. But it didn't really look like a mission hall, not like the ugly old Glad Tydings she went to when she was a kid. This one's more like an ordinary house, neat and chirpy with its red brick and little garden, only the door's a bit wider and there's a statue of Jesus in the garden, stark white as though the moon were out. Funny it's so white, unless it's new, but it doesn't look somehow new, must be special stuff, but there's not even any birds' mess or anything on it.

Two school boys came round from the back of the mission and stood in front of the door, waiting, one swinging a cap in his hand. They were talking but she could hear nothing. Watching them she remembered her brother when they were school kids together. He's at college now, he's grown strange, a bit difficult to get on with. Last time he was home they didn't talk much and then one day he asked her how she was getting on and what she did with herself and what she thought about now. And then straight out, just like that, without giving her time to answer or anything he said Dilly, he'd been thinking a lot lately, he got muddled and his head got thick and bumping with God knows what and everything went crashing against him, across him. He said *that*, everything crashed against him! and she thought I'm his sister and it was like sharing something, sharing something solemn like a word, not like the sharing out when they were kids. And he said when he felt alright he thought that was how it was, how everything was changing all the time and how

it was no good us just letting ourselves slip into it because we'd choke and die, but we had to stand still and put out our hand and grip so hard that it left a fist mark. And then his voice, because he'd been talking quite loud and fast, went a bit quieter, and he said how he'd been writing a few poems lately. Dilly had thought not a fist but a knife, and then she had felt so frightened she had to go out of the room. It was like a hope, a desperate miserable hope that she mustn't think about.

And here she was thinking about it. Rain clouds were moving over, the air was slightly darker and slightly colder. Trees were bending and shaking in the wind, their colours were darkening and lightening black and dark green against different patches of the sky. A few more people were on the street and a man had sat down beside her. He coughed and his back shook. The boys were still across the road waiting and one of them swinging his cap, swinging and swinging.

The bus drew up, faces stared at her. She got on and sat among them and looked back out of the window at the statue hard and white behind her, oh, behind her. She mustn't think.

**"HONEST TO GOD"**

**Published by S.C.M.**

John Robinson believes that the mythological method of "putting across" God has come to obscure rather than illuminate Christian theology. He suggests that instead of using the image of "height" for God, we might more usefully talk about God as "deep," as, in Tillich's phrase, "The ground of our being."

Robinson leans very heavily indeed upon the writings of Paul Tillich ("The Depth of Existence"), Dietrich Bonhoeffer ("Letters and Papers from Prison"), and Rudolf Bultmann ("New Testament Mythology"). He uses these writers to voice honestly the doubts which many Christians have about the stock theological college interpretations of the Bible.

The ideas here, although most of them aren't Robinson's own, are certainly interesting and illuminating, even for the non-Christian. Particularly good is the handling of the conception of Christ's love.

Robinson attacks fairly consistently the "supernaturalist" God who is "out there" and conceived as a part of the world, albeit its dominator. Instead the "depth" God is substituted.

Personally, I don't find the substitution very convincing. The changing of the metaphor may jolt the convinced Christian into new awareness, but to the outsider any idea of demythologising seems to be incomplete without the removal of the chief mythological "character," from the external point of view, God himself.

We are told God is the ultimate reality, God is love, God is personal relationships; but one must, surely, be prompted to ask why ultimate reality is not simply ultimate reality, or love love, or human relationships human relationships? Why must they be also God?

JAMES JOYCE'S ULYSSES

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The reader is unlikely to be in a position to question Mr. Gilbert's findings; he writes as a friend of James Joyce, and as a critic who has spent longer on "Ulysses" than most of us. His intentions are summed up in his introductory chapter when he says

"The meaning of *Ulysses*, for it has a meaning and is not a mere photographic "slice of life"—far from it—is not to be sought in any analysis of the acts of the protagonist or the mental make-up of the characters; it is, rather, implicit in the technique of the various episodes, in the nuances of language, in the thousand and one correspondences and allusions with which the book is studded."

The bulk of the book points out these correspondences and allusions, which range from Sanskrit to potted meat. The dominant theme explored is the parallel with Homer's *Odyssey*. Joyce's story corresponds to Homer's almost episode for episode. Mr. Gilbert's chapter headings are the incidents of Homer's epic which is compared to the "epic" of Bloom's day. Drawing this correspondence tighter, Gilbert refers to Vico's theory of historical cycles—

"A Nestor may reappear as an elderly pedagogue, a Circe as the "Madam" of a one-horse brothel."

According to Joyce's manipulation of theories of reincarnation, Ulysses has shrunk to Leopold Bloom, and Telemachus to Stephen Dedalus.

Mr. Gilbert's work is thorough and absorbing. Joyce's work suits this kind of interpretative, even creative, criticism, for it is the kind of writing one is supposed to read into.

It is surprising to find no space devoted to Jung whose association and archetype theories certainly influenced Joyce.

LORELIE FARMER

**"MODERN AMERICAN STORIES"**

Edited by Gene Baro

Published by Faber and Faber

The short story has played an important role in American literature from the first half of the nineteenth century. It has been more suited than the novel to the rapidly changing and disintegrated society of the United States, its form able to expose an aspect of experience in a few strokes. In the last forty years, especially, there has been a tremendous outpouring of short stories, and this selection, taken over this period, is small enough to be justly called "the cream."

All the stories included are extremely skilfully written and present some of the principal contemporary concerns and techniques in the medium. The subject matter is varied and seems to colour particular sections of American society.

Peter Taylor writes of a "Fancy Woman" of the mid-South who dreams—

"that together she and Jock had watched a giant bear devouring a bull, and Jock had laughed and for some reason she had said, 'Thank your stars you're white!' He was all right. She was practically sure."

Philip Roth describes the half-fantastic religious struggles of a boy in a Jewish community, yet in completely different tone from Tillie Olsen's description of the gradual death of a Jewish woman who cannot face her family—

"It was not that she had not loved her babies, her children. The love—the passion of tending—had risen with the need like a torrent; and like a torrent drowned and immolated all all else. But when the need was done—O the power that was lost in the painful damming back and drying up of what still flooded, but had nowhere to go. Only the thin pulsing left that could not quiet, suffering over lives one felt, but could no longer hold nor help."



Jean Stafford meticulously nets the cold jewelled horror of a girl in hospital. Alfred Chester comes nearer to poetry than the other writers in his story of the impossible mute sacrifices a bigoted railroad engineer unknowingly exacts from his girl—

“My God to make something so perfect like that and it being a waste. Imagine an automobile or a washing machine being all shaped up with all the little tiny cutie details so perfect and then all to waste. It couldn't be.”

Here is Saul Bellow describing a Relief man in the negro district of Chicago:

“Then he struck a match in the gloom and searched for names and numbers among the writings and scribbles on the walls. He saw “WHOOODY-DOODY GO TO JESUS,” and zigzags, caricatures, sexual scrawls, and curses. So the sealed rooms of pyramids were also decorated, and the caves of human dawn.”

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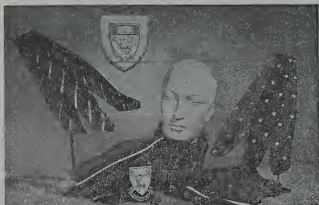
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